

VISION STATEMENTS  
FOR  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAMS

A SUGGESTED WRITING PROCESS



# VISION STATEMENT

## PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

### 1. GOAL

The vision statement intends to identify those things that are valued and what contributions are made that are unique and memorable. Why would someone choose to be involved with the program, or what distinguishes this program from others? What values are brought to the process that set the program apart and make it stand out?



### 2. PROCESS

Once the mission is identified, it is important to then identify why, in the doing of the mission, the program is different from all the others who may also do the same mission. The process to identify these values will be inductive in nature.

### 3. TIMING

The timing of the sessions is at the group's discretion. Using longer blocks of time (day long sessions) as opposed to shorter periods reduces the amount of time spent "getting people back up to speed." Meetings held as close together as possible will most effectively retain continuity.



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### 1. PRAYER

It is important that these activities be done in the context of prayer and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

### 2. INFORMATION GATHERING

This process may be accomplished using a program questionnaire (see sample on page 7). In the mission statement writing process, the group “for whom” the program works was identified. To begin this process the people you serve will be questioned on how they perceive the program and the work that is done. The method for doing this will depend on the group identified as the primary focus of ministry (please feel free to modify the questions to suit the particular “clientel.” The issues to be surfaced have to do with the quality of the service performed and the attitudes that are communicated to those served. The task is to identify the “adjectives” that get used about what the program does. It is not necessary to survey everyone but the people should be widely inclusive. Picking only friends will not help in the long run.

An example: everyone who drives knows the mission of the “Department of Motor Vehicles.” Many who drive could also respond with a list of adjectives to describe their encounters with this department (the environment is sterile, makes me feel like a part of a herd, perfunctory, cold, lifeless, humorless, hurry up and wait, etc, etc.). No one would go to the Dept. of Motor Vehicles unless forced to do so by law. Is the same true for the religious education program?

### ALTERNATIVE PROCESS

If gathering information from the “clients” is not possible, it will be necessary to brainstorm the answer to these questions (however, there is no real substitute for actual information). Use this question to start the brainstorming: When people (meaning the primary clients) hear the name “(the program name)” what three adjectives would they use to describe the attitude, the environment, and the quality of service and materials in the program?

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## A SUGGESTED WRITING PROCESS CONT'D

### 3. THE WHY PROCESS

From the information gathered, identify why people would list those particular words about the program. Try to be specific about the kind of actions that would lead people to think/feel about the program in that way. Be sure to include the positive as well as the negative. Remember, just because someone does not like something does not mean that it can or should change. For example, the requirement to have signed parental release forms may not be popular but it is necessary. Create a list of these actions both positive and negative.

### 4. THE DISTILLING PROCESS #1

Use the positive and negative adjectives and order them into separate lists in their order of importance based on the number of occurrences reported from the questionnaire (or brainstorming). Do the same for the positive and negative actions list just created and try to rank the actions in order of importance. Using these lists ask the following question: "From the lists of adjectives and actions, what values present themselves?" For example, if the adjective is "welcoming" the value would be hospitality. An action identified may be "always having coffee for parish meetings." The value would be hospitality.

### 5. THE DISTILLING PROCESS #2

Once all of the values that emerge from the list are identified, list those values that appear most often. This will yield two lists of values, one positive and one negative, rank ordered by frequency of occurrence. Both of these lists are important in the development of a vision statement.

### 6. THE DISTILLING PROCESS #3

Using the negative list of values, identify if the opposite value is already listed on the positive side. If the positive value is not listed then note it on the positive list with an asterisk. Proceed through the negative list until a positive value for all the negative information is contained on the positive list.

### 7. THE RANKING PROCESS #1

Have each person take all the words on the positive list and rank the words in order of importance choosing only the five most important (5 words for each list). #5 is the most important word on the list, etc. Combine each person's choices by indicating the number of times that a particular word is rated in the top five. See the example in section 110, p. 7.

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## A SUGGESTED WRITING PROCESS CONT'D

### 8. THE RANKING PROCESS #2

The weighted totals for each group of values should indicate the approximate feelings of the group in relation to each value. The group is free to rearrange the words at this point if the relative weighting of the particular value is not acceptable, as long as the entire group agrees. From the conversation to this point, are there any values that can be combined into a larger idea?

### 9. THE SELECTION PROCESS #1

The group should agree on the top two or three values that emerge from the ranking process. These are given to one person who is charged with the process of actually writing the statement of vision using the words from the group.

### 10. THE SELECTION PROCESS #2

Once a statement is crafted, the group can then accept the statement or can seek refinements in the statement. The only rule at this time is that each person must agree that the statement is one that they can "live with and support."

### 11. NOTES TO THE STATEMENT WRITER

- a. The statement should fit on the back of a business card.
- b. The statement identifies the customer, not in terms of a market but rather in terms of the need that will lead that person to the program.
- c. The statement identifies the fundamental value(s) that responds to the need that is identified in "b" above.
- d. The statement identifies that which makes the program different, or allows it to stand out, so that the customer recognizes the value.
- e. The statement seeks to be direct, clear and forceful in a statement of value.
- f. The statement must be realistic enough that people can see themselves participating in the attainment of the value identified and articulated.<sup>2</sup>

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2. Several of the ideas and examples are borrowed from Karl Albrecht, *The Northbound Train*, New York: The American Management Association, 1994, pages 153-158.

# VISION STATEMENT

**Example:** The vision of the Levi Straus & Co. is to sustain profitable and responsible commercial success by marketing jeans and selected casual apparel under the Levi's brand.

[This is a poor vision statement. Where is the customer and what is the value that would inspire?]

**Example:** "Po' Folks" Restaurants. We always want to be the friendliest place you'll ever find to bring your family for great tasting, homestyle cooking, served with care and pride in a pleasant country-style setting at reasonable prices.

[This is an excellent vision statement. It is clear who the customer is, and the value is inviting and interesting.]

